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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 000824

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV, DRL/IRF, PRM, CA/VO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [CVIS](#) [PREF](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [VM](#) [RELFREE](#) [HUMANR](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER UBCV MONK TO PURSUE IMMIGRANT VISA AFTER
RESETTLING IN SWEDEN

Ref: HCMC 0336

1. (SBU) Mr. Pham Van Tuong, formerly known as Thich Tri Luc while still a monk with the banned Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, has confirmed that he is now scheduled to depart Vietnam on June 22 under UNHCR auspices for resettlement in Sweden. He will travel with his wife and child. Mr. Tuong said he plans to follow up with AmEmbassy Stockholm on an existing SRI immigrant visa petition after establishing residence in Sweden. Post requests that AmEmbassy Bangkok and AmEmbassy Stockholm enter Mr. Tuong into the Lookout System to facilitate further processing at an appropriate time.

2. (SBU) On June 3, 2004, Mr. Tuong mailed the ConGen (without explanation) a copy of an I-797 Notice of Approval containing the following information:

RECEIPT NUMBER: EAC-02-274-53468

RECEIPT DATE: AUGUST 30, 2002

PRIORITY DATE: AUGUST 29, 2002

NOTICE DATE: APRIL 1, 2003

CASE TYPE: I360; PETITION FOR AMERASIAN, WIDOWER OR

SPECIAL IMMIGRANT

PETITIONER: ANANDA BUDDHIST INST

C/O ABOTT THICH VAN DAM

3418 ANNANDALE ROAD

FALLS CHURCH, VA 22042

NOTICE TYPE: APPROVAL NOTICE

SECTION: SPECIAL IMMIGRANT - RELIGIOUS WORKER, Sec.

101(a)(27)(C)(ii)

3. (SBU) According to our Consular Section records, USCIS approved his petition in April 2003. AmEmbassy Bangkok has confirmed that the petition is already in their files. The case number is PHP2003599003. Mr. Tuong understands that he will need to contact AmEmbassy Stockholm to have the case transferred there for processing. He also understands that there is no guarantee that he will qualify for that visa status until he applies.

4. (SBU) In a meeting at the ConGen on June 18, Mr. Tuong said the GVN had issued him a passport three days earlier, despite his inability to obtain the required residency documents since his release from prison on March 26, 2004. He credited UNHCR in Hanoi for keeping steady pressure on the GVN, and thanked the Embassy and ConGen for their concern. Mr. Tuong said he had been questioned frequently by the police since his release, but did not describe any other harassment. At the suggestion of UNHCR and the police, he had drafted and signed a "commitment letter" promising to refrain from any activities that might disrupt or disturb the GVN once he has left Vietnam. He told ConGenoffs that he planned to remain involved in the cause of human rights and religious freedom, regardless of what he wrote in the letter.

5. (SBU) The International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is making arrangements on behalf of UNHCR, has advised Mr. Tuong to meet with a representative from the Consulate General of Sweden at a local police station on June 22. They have also assured him that an IOM representative will meet him upon his arrival in Sweden, although he did not seem to have any idea where he would be living or what he would be doing there. He was uncertain whether someone from UNHCR or IOM would accompany him and his family to the airport for their flight. ConGenoffs advised Mr. Tuong not to pack any documents or items that might be of a sensitive nature. His itinerary is as follows:

-- 22Jun LH773 SGN-FRA 2030 0520

-- 23Jun LH3000 FRA-ARN 0715 0915

-- 23Jun SK6736 ARN-JKG 1210 1310

6. (SBU) Pham Van Tuong was a long-time UBCV monk who fled to Cambodia in 2002 and was granted refugee status by UNHCR, before reportedly being kidnapped by Vietnamese agents and brought back to HCMC (reftel). He was later held in prison in HCMC for over a year, and then sentenced to time served plus a few months. The GVN denied knowing where he was until just before his trial. After his release, the GVN agreed to cooperate with UNHCR on processing his refugee claim. ConGen has maintained regular contact with him ever since. He received refugee admissions documents from Swedish authorities back in May, and his wife and child were issued passports at roughly the same time.

7. (SBU) Mr. Tuong said he had been aware that a monk in the U.S. was "sponsoring" him while he was in Phnom Penh pursuing his

refugee case in 2002, but had never seen the notice of approval until just recently. He had not discussed the matter with the GVN, for fear it would cause delays in obtaining his passport and refugee documents for Sweden. He had, however, been in contact with the UBCV's Paris-based International Buddhist Information Bureau via email.

YAMAUCHI